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USDA TO HOLD CONFERENCE ON AGRICULTURE AS ENERGY PRODUCER, USER JUNE 24-25

WASHINGTON, May 21, 2004—The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Farm Foundation will hold a public conference on agriculture as a producer and consumer of energy June 24 and 25 in Arlington, Va., USDA Chief Economist Keith Collins said today.

“Experts from the private sector, research and government will take a hard look at how to improve efforts that influence agriculture’s energy conservation and renewable energy production,” Collins said. “We have asked them to help us identify research needs, technologies and investment opportunities that will enhance agriculture’s contribution to energy security,” he added.

Renewable energy is becoming more important for farmers, and for the nation. The 2002 Farm Bill was the first to include an energy title, aimed at expanding renewable energy supplies and making farming more energy-efficient. President Bush’s energy plan calls for greater energy independence through expanded use of renewable energy. USDA estimates that production of ethanol is growing rapidly, and now accounts for more than a tenth of U.S. corn use.

The conference is expected to draw energy industry executives, commodity leaders, agribusiness managers, economists and government officials. Noted speakers will include C. Boyden Gray of the Energy Future Coalition, Kevin Lindemer, director of strategy and business development for Irving Oil Ltd. and professors Otto Doering, Purdue University; Vernon Eidman, University of Minnesota; and John Miranowski, Iowa State University.

The two-day program includes sessions on the future of ethanol and biodiesel, the economics of bioenergy, biofuels case studies, biomass supply potential, farm energy use and energy conservation and efficiency. The conference will wrap up with an industry panel and roundtable discussions. See www.farmfoundation.org for the full program and online registration.

The public is invited to attend the meeting, which takes place at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City Hotel in Arlington, VA. The early registration fee is just \$175 until May 31. Hotel room reservations may be made directly with the Hyatt Regency hotel by calling (800) 233-1234 or (703) 418-1234; a special conference rate is available until June 2. For more information on the conference contact Steve Halbrook at (630) 571-9393 and Steve@farmfoundation.org.

Journalists planning to cover the event may contact Steve Halbrook. For more information on the conference contact James Duffield of USDA’s Office of Energy Policy and New Uses at (202) 401-0523 or jduffield@oce.usda.gov.

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